UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
LIMITED

E/ICEF/1997/P/L.8
25 October 1996

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

FOR INFORMATION

UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND
Executive Board
First regular session 1997
20-24 January 1997
Item 3 of the provisional agenda*

COUNTRY NOTE**

Papua New Guinea

SUMMARY

The Executive Director presents the country note for Papua New Guinea for a programme of cooperation for the period 1998 to 2002.

THE SITUATION OF CHILDREN AND WOMEN

1. Over 800 culturally and linguistically distinct small-scale societies are dispersed throughout the mountainous terrain and islands of Papua New Guinea. Communication with the 85 per cent of the population who live in rural areas is difficult and expensive. Despite a middle-income per capita gross national product of $1,130, many of the country's social indicators are similar to those of least developed countries because the rural population is economically poor. The provinces face management difficulties and shortages of trained human resources, even though they receive 70 per cent of government budget allocations.

2. Papua New Guinea has ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child. However, women are frequent targets of violence and have low status, and the fertility rate and the dependency ratio are high. The average woman gives birth to six children during her life. Complications of pregnancy are the major causes of maternal mortality, estimated to be at least 930 per 100,000 live births. Maternal malnutrition results in over 25 per cent of babies being born under weight, while 34 per cent of children under five years of age are malnourished. Over the last decade, the infant mortality rate rose from

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* E/ICEF/1997/2.

** An addendum to the present report containing the final country programme recommendation will be submitted to the Executive Board for approval at its third regular session of 1997.

72 to 82 per 1,000 live births. Major causes are acute respiratory infections, malaria, meningitis and diarrhoea. New threats include sexually transmitted diseases, which have shown steady increases in recent years. The rate of HIV prevalence is the highest in the Pacific region.

3. It is not clear how well extended families and communities meet children's health, nutrition and other development needs. However, the community-based vernacular Tok Ples preschools help to prepare children for entry into primary schools. The primary school enrolment rate has increased steadily and is now about 75 per cent, with similar enrolment rates for girls and boys, but the percentage of girls enrolled declines thereafter. The literacy rate is around 45 per cent.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM PAST COOPERATION

4. While the value of goal-oriented programmes for children has been recognized in Papua New Guinea, experience has demonstrated the need to adapt goals to the unique needs and conditions in the country and for UNICEF-assisted programmes to focus on a limited number of well-defined objectives. Strong advocacy and social mobilization efforts by UNICEF have helped to raise awareness among policy makers of the worsening situation of children, to broaden political support for the child survival programme and to recognize the need for a multisectoral approach to child-focused policies and programmes.

5. More coherent and well-planned strategies for advocacy and mobilization are now necessary to aim at all potential partners in Government, civil society at national and subnational levels and the donor community, to move beyond awareness-raising to systematic planning, implementation, budget allocations and monitoring of programmes for children and women.

6. Improving the country's knowledge base on the situation and rights of children and women will help both the Government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), including churches and women's groups, to articulate policy and programme implications of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. There is a need to build the capacity of the Government and NGOs in these areas and to establish an interdepartmental body to address these issues.

7. Policies and ongoing decentralization reforms have shown that national capacity-building alone is not adequate and that capacities for planning and monitoring at the provincial level, and for service delivery at community level, need to be developed in diverse cultural settings. The traditional roles of churches, women's groups and communities in participating in and contributing to their collective well-being need to be noted and mobilized.

PROPOSED COUNTRY PROGRAMME STRATEGY

8. The Government's policy framework for preparing the new country programme reflects a renewed sense of hope and optimism for children and women based on: (a) the recognition of the framework of the Convention on the Rights of the Child; (b) national health and education plans, recently prepared by the Government, with a set of realistic goals and strategies; (c) the re-establishment of the National Planning Office; (d) the United Nations country strategy note; and (e) substantial funds provided by the Australian Agency for International Development for health and education programmes for the period of the proposed country programme.

9. The country programme objectives will be to: (a) increase public awareness of and political support for child health and education goals and rights through advocacy and social mobilization; (b) work with donors, other United Nations agencies and the newly created provincial and district health boards and other government groups to develop child-centred national policies and programmes; and (c) through studies, evaluations, analysis and district-level inputs, establish a knowledge base and disseminate best programming practices for children and demonstrate sustainable, working examples for building local capacities. These objectives will be pursued in appropriate combinations at national, provincial and district levels.

10. The main strategies of advocacy, social mobilization and capacity-building will be reinforced through a complementary strategy of policy and programme development, employing sectoral programmes, e.g., health and education, in a more cost-effective intersectoral framework at district and community levels. A supportive coverage strategy for advocacy and social mobilization and programme interventions will be developed at national, provincial and district levels with government and non-government partners. National-level activities will include mobilization of political and civic leaders, e.g., women's groups, in support of child rights issues and the prevention of violence against women. Provincial-level cooperation will include support for social mobilization activities as well as mobilization of political leadership to allocate budgetary resources; the development of provincial multisectoral social planning and monitoring capacities; improved coordination to support district and community levels from which the best practices will be disseminated nationwide; and selected support to multisectoral service delivery, e.g., interrelated health, nutrition and early childhood education services, which will provide cost-effective examples to support national advocacy efforts in all provinces.

11. Advocacy and social mobilization. A flexible approach for mobilizing all sectors for health and education promotion will continue. Priority attention will be directed to protecting the rights and well-being of girls and women. UNICEF regional support will be used to assist in the development of new interventions. Social mobilization will help to create wider social awareness of the rights of the most vulnerable children and women. UNICEF will continue to support monitoring and reporting on implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child so as to expedite its incorporation into law and legal protection by law enforcement agencies. National and provincial activities will include the development of a child-centred social policy, political mobilization in support of child rights and mobilization of women's groups and other NGOs to address the unequal status of women and to build partnerships to reduce violence against women. Education on the prevention of HIV/AIDS will focus on high-risk groups such as teenagers and young adults and the development of educational and training packages, involving working closely with the World Health Organization (WHO), provincial political leaders, the National Youth Service, the National Council of Women (NCW), churches, schools and the Health Department.

12. Capacity development. As the district is the operational unit for the coordinated delivery of services for children, selected provinces will be assisted to develop mechanisms for the coordination of government and non-government parties, workable mother-baby packages and community-based nutrition activities to serve as examples of best programme practices for children. At the district level, UNICEF will support the development of new nutrition and early childhood development (ECD) interventions involving communities, churches, NGOs and the NCW. In collaboration with WHO, UNICEF will help to mobilize district health and education departments, church health services and women's and other civic groups to establish a multisectoral approach to health promotion. Increased ECD coverage will be encouraged through

the promotion of more systematic policies and programmes and the development of networks of NGOs and community day-care providers. The education strategy will involve government and NGO adult literacy programmes, especially for women, on life skills, health promotion and other efforts to improve the status of women. The quality and relevance of elementary and primary education will be enhanced through support for improving school curricula, multigrade teaching and school clusters. Facts for Life, conflict resolution, life skills, health and nutrition information will be incorporated into the national curriculum. Developing the capacity of community-level school boards will improve management and mobilize community support for schools.

13. Policy and programme development. UNICEF will support a long-term process for assessment, analysis and action related to the policy implications of the Convention on the Rights of the Child for Government and civil society. Studies and evaluations will form the core of a knowledge base on child-related policies. Other education and health initiatives presently advocated or funded by UNICEF will be expanded significantly through donor assistance. Under the coordination of the Government, UNICEF will work closely with WHO and the United Nations Population Fund to provide technical support for policy and programme development. UNICEF will support the development of provincial planning and monitoring capacities. Because the recent Organic Law on decentralization shifts responsibility for implementation to the districts, building provincial capacity for multisectoral planning, coordination and monitoring to support districts and communities in selected provinces will be a strategic priority. Some support to service delivery will enrich planning capacity as well as respond effectively to major child rights issues.

ESTIMATED PROGRAMME BUDGET

Estimated programme cooperation, 1998-2002 a/
(In thousands of United States dollars)

	General resources	Supplementary funds	Total
Advocacy and social mobilization	1 500	-	1 500
Capacity development	2 250	4 000	6 250
Policy and programme development	500	-	500
Total	4 250	4 000	8 250

a/ These are indicative figures only which are subject to change once aggregate financial data are finalized.